strengthening the line at that point or of massing guns and reserves behind. The heights and the more formidable defence works could therefore be carried before the Germans could have time to construct a new defence system, or rally sufficient reserves for a counter-attack. That was Nivelle's expectation. But its realisation depended entirely on surprise.

The other element was time. The Germans were accustomed to the heavy-footed and clattering movements of Joffre and Haig—the long laborious and noisy preparations, whose *plan* nimble you could hear for leagues with a favourable wind. They knew that not a shot would be fired until the last shell had been pinnacled in the last dump, and the last duckboard had been nailed in the last line of approach. That always meant that the date of attacks was generally postponed and never anticipated, and that 'the Germans had ample warning and time to make their counter preparations. That is why the " set piece " always failed. The defence gained fourfold as much from time as did the attack. Nivelle was conscious of this. His last success was due to surprise. His next would be planned on the same idea. Had the Nivelle plan been carried out in its integrity, I still believe it would have been an immense success. At the projected date of his offensive there were only eight German divisions—including reserves—in and

behind the lines he proposed to attack. At
Fatal effect of the actual date of advance—
about two
postponement months later—there were
forty. Warning
having been given, the Germans massed
their reserves behind the point of
anticipated attack.
Having by that date completed their
retirement to
the Hindenburg line, they had by that
means saved